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UNCLAS FRANKFURT 011824

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, EUR/ERA, AND EB
USDOC FOR 4212/ITA/MAC/EUR/AGS
DOE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
DOE/NN30 MARK ROTH
TREAS FOR OASIA: ROBERT HARLOW, CAROL CARNES
DEPT FOR NP/SC WARREN STERN
NRC FOR BETTY WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ENRG](#) [ECON](#) [SENV](#) [PGOV](#) [GM](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: GERMANY'S OLDEST POWER PLANT, OBRIGHEIM TO SHUT
DOWN IN 2005: EXTENSION HARMED GREEN PARTY CREDIBILITY AND
NUCLEAR PHASEOUT PLANS

SENSITIVE

REF: FRANKFURT 09759

1. (SBU) Summary: Federal Environment Minister Juergen Trittin and Energie Baden-Wuerttemberg (ENBW, Germany's third largest energy supplier), have come to an agreement for the shutdown of Germany's oldest nuclear reactor Obrigheim on November 15, 2005. The 2003 shutdown of Obrigheim was part of the Green Party "nuclear phaseout" plan. But in late September, the Greens were forced by Chancellor Schroeder (SPD) to accept a two-year, rather open-ended operating extension for Obrigheim, which harmed their credibility and cost them local political support in Baden-Wuerttemberg. The B-W Greens are relieved at the new development and a firm date for final shutdown. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Originally, Obrigheim nuclear power plant, Germany's oldest, was scheduled for shutdown in early 2003 as part of the SPD-Green coalitions "nuclear phaseout" plan. (The plant is located near Heidelberg.) However, Chancellor Schroeder's promised Gerhard Goll, CEO of ENBW, a two-year, rather open-ended extension in late September, just a few days after winning national elections. (Energy Baden-Wuerttemberg, ENBW, is Germany's third largest energy supplier.) The operating extension for Obrigheim led to considerable strain in the SPD-Green Party national coalition in Berlin and created turmoil with the southwest Greens. The B-W Greens had been fighting to shut down Obrigheim since the early 1980s. ENBW had originally asked for a five-year extension until 2008. The two-year compromise that was finally reached involved transferring 5.5 terawatt hours from the Philippsburg I plant (near Karlsruhe) to Obrigheim. The B-W Greens, however, never really accepted this compromise made at the national level. In several conversations with B-W Greens, we were told that there is considerable concern within the party that ENBW would try to push the extension, via various loopholes, beyond 2005. (Note: At the latest B-W Greens convention in Esslingen, Greens caucus chief Winfried Kretschmann attacked former national party chief Fritz Kuhn for accepting the compromise. "You should have never agreed to the extension," Kretschmann said. End Note.)

3. (SBU) The B-W Greens are relieved, now that ENBW is accepting an official contract that determines November 15, 2005 as the final shutdown date. They feel now that a contract is signed, ENBW cannot exploit tricks and loopholes to push the extension beyond 2005. Individual party members still criticized National Environment Minister Trittin for not pushing Goll for an earlier date. Nevertheless, Obrigheim will be shutdown well before the next B-W state elections, in the spring of 2006. B-W Minister of Economics, Walter Doering (FDP), criticized the planned shutdown of the reactor, stating that alternative employment opportunities will need to be found for the people affected. However, the news lifts a big burden from the B-W Greens. Already under attack for making too many compromises, the Green Party's chances in the 2006 B-W state elections could have been seriously harmed by Obrigheim's continued operation beyond 2005. In addition, the Green rank and file remains angry with its national leadership for accepting the two-year extension in the first place. Minister Trittin's surprise announcement will help to smooth ruffled feathers in the southwest.

4. (U) This message has been coordinated with Embassy Berlin.

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